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ABSTRACT

This report on rural child care in Ontario provides a literature review, a discussion of the term "rural," summaries of related studies, descriptions of program models, and an analysis of statistical data indicating the need for services. The literature review focuses on geographic, economic, and political factors; staffing; rural and urban differences in values and attitudes; integration and flexibility; and rural advantages, models, and child care. The definition of the term "rural" is approached in terms of general considerations, points made in the Canadian Rural Development Council's 1979 workshop report, findings of a survey circulated to Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) area office staff, and a typology thought to serve better than a simple urban/rural dichotomy. The reports of studies of rural child care echo those described in the literature on rural service delivery. The models of delivery systems discussed include center- and home-based care, resource and drop-in centers, mobile programs, and cooperatives. Problems of transportation and linkages and integration of services are also discussed. Prior to a concluding statement that summarizes the report, information from Statistics Canada and the Day Nurseries Information System are analyzed. An appendix provides a description of four MCSS rural child care pilot or demonstration projects. (RH)

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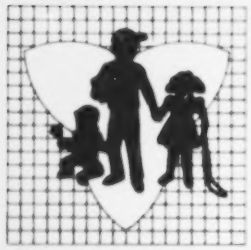

Child Care

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AN OVERVIEW OF RURAL CHILD CARE NEEDS AND PREFERENCES

Dr. Rona Abramovitch

Ministry of Community and
Social Services
Child Care Branch

PREFACE

The need for child care by families living in rural Ontario is an issue that has recently generated both concern and interest. This report was undertaken to provide a picture of rural child care needs and preferences as well as to assist in planning child care services for rural areas. It provides a general overview of issues and problems and a discussion of possible models that might be considered in a rural context.

The report consists of a literature review on rural child care and a discussion of rural definitions. A series of interviews and a survey of needs and preferences was done for the report. In addition, surveys that had already been done by others and relevant statistics are also included. Although child care is a concern for families in all communities, this report attempts to identify the issues unique to rural areas.

The report was prepared by Rona Abramovitch, a University of Toronto professor while on sabbatical leave from July, 1985 to June, 1986. The research for the report was done in the summer and fall of that period.

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I INTRODUCTION

The issue of child care in rural communities in Ontario has recently become a focus of concern and interest. In May, 1984, a report by Molly McGhee entitled, "Women in Rural Life. The Changing Scene" was tabled by Dennis Timbrell, who was then the Minister of Agriculture. The report is a summary of the results of public meetings and written briefs in which rural women in Ontario expressed their views and concerns. Child care was one of the issues raised as being most important to rural women -- it was identified as an issue in 76% of the submissions received by Molly McGhee. Recommendation six of her report calls for an assessment of child care needs and provision of required child care in rural communities.

Although there is recognition that rural communities are under-serviced with respect to child care, the extent of the need for rural child care is not really known. Furthermore, it is not clear what the most appropriate child care models might be.

While some rural programs do exist (e.g., rural resource centres), this is in the absence of an overall approach or policy framework. An assessment and identification of the needs of rural communities, of the existing programming, and of the gaps in programming are necessary in order to determine a comprehensive strategy.

The goal of this report is to present the issues involved in the delivery of child care services to rural communities in Ontario and to present some preliminary data on needs and preferences. The paper is divided into several sections and has been organized so that each part can be read independently.

The first section is a review of the literature on the delivery of social services to rural areas. Much of this literature applies to health care and target populations such as the elderly. It is also a distinctly U.S. literature. However, the general issues that are raised readily apply to child care and the Canadian situation. The review is meant simply to give an overview of the major problems that must be faced when planning rural service delivery — it is therefore broad and general in focus.

This general review is followed by a more specific review, namely of the literature attempting to arrive at a definition of the term "rural". It will be clear from this section that there is no single definition and that any attempt at definition involves some degree of arbitrariness. Information and suggestions on definition obtained from interviews with various people throughout Ontario will also be included in this section.

The next sections of the paper report on a series of empirical investigations, undertaken by the author and others, on child care needs and preferences in rural Ontario and Canada. In many, but not all instances the target group is farm families with young children. However, non-farm rural families are also represented. Data collection techniques range from semi-structured interviews (done in person and by telephone) to highly structured questionnaires. Each investigation or survey is written-up

independently in order to allow the reader to assess the scope and meaning of the results.

Following the "investigations" is a description of possible models of child care appropriate to rural areas. This is not meant to be an exhaustive listing. Rather it is a selection of ideas that have been tried in rural communities (in Ontario and elsewhere) or have been suggested for rural areas. The purpose of this section is to indicate some of the possible solutions to the problems posed by the need for diversity and flexibility when providing rural child care.

The next section focuses on the current availability of rural child care in Ontario and contrasts availability with need. In this section "need" is measured in terms of Statistics Canada data on the number of young children in the province, living in population centres of varying size, whose parents do or do not work. Availability of child care is also looked at in terms of population centres of varying size and the "match" between the two data sets gives some indication of the extent to which less urban, more rural areas are currently under-serviced.

A series of specific conclusions end the report. (It should be noted that while this report attempts to explore the issues involved in delivering child care services to families in rural Ontario, there has been no attempt to address the special needs of Native communities. This would require a special investigation of its own and was not seen to be within the scope of the present report.)

II. GENERAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although rural areas are diverse in many respects, they share a number of common problems regarding social service delivery: geographical isolation, a limited population base, limited economic resources and limited employment opportunities. These are the major themes that recur in the literature. In addition there are a number of other themes which combine with these factors to create even more complex problems: real or perceived urban biases in service planning and funding, the social and political attitudes often found in rural areas and difficulties of recruiting adequately trained staff.

All of these phenomena are highly interactive and it is difficult to discuss them separately without creating artificial distinctions or oversimplications. It is also almost impossible, from a practical point of view, to try to correct a deficiency in service delivery by concentrating on a single variable or problem. As Bachrach (1981) points out "service requirements...form a gestalt that is difficult to penetrate..."

In addition to all of these factors another barrier to the delivery of services in rural areas is the absence of a solid data base on which to build policy and programs. Much of what is in the literature is anecdotal and it is therefore easier to identify the problems than the solutions.

The following discussion is an attempt to describe briefly the barriers and their consequences and to provide some general discussion of possible remedies.

1) Geographic Factors

Geography is probably the most basic and common service barrier. Coping with distances and space alone creates differences between urban and rural communities. Distances between family and friends, distances to schools, services, markets, religious centres -- how distance is viewed and dealt with -- affects relationships between people and institutions. It is also the case that one is likely to find a different population distribution in urban and rural areas -- in urban areas the poor tend to live in clusters while the rural poor are often scattered. Rural areas often have less access to the communications and media systems of the culture. They are often served by a patchwork of systems and have limited access to television and radio -- and are therefore less "in tune" with mainstream culture. It is often the case that the telephone system is limited with a majority of even "social" calls being long distance and therefore expensive.

However, the most pronounced result of geography is difficulty of transportation. This difficulty produces major barriers to service delivery, which are in turn affected by economic, climatic, geographic and demographic factors (Bachrach 1981). It should be noted, however, that some form of transportation is a necessity for service delivery. Yet this problem is often one of the most difficult to address, making it imperative

to generate and experiment with new and alternate modes of transportation.

It has been pointed out (Ginsberg 1976) that many rural areas do not have public transit. However, available employment may be miles away making the ownership of a car a necessity. Commuting is therefore not just a suburban phenomenon. And many people are tied -- for economic, interpersonal and other reasons -- to homes in more remote or rural areas.

2) Economic Factors

The economic situation of many rural communities also presents a barrier. Rural communities often have less ability than urban communities to generate revenue -- due to higher rates of poverty, lower incomes and a restricted property base. Revenue is often seasonal, further adding to an unreliable economic base. Thus the economy of many rural areas is not sufficient to support all of the needed services -- this is compounded by the fact that rural programs often cost more per unit. Also the demographic make-up of rural and urban areas may be different -- in particular, it has been suggested that at least some rural communities have higher "dependency ratios" (the percentage of individuals under 18 and over 65), leading to increased need and therefore increased pressure on limited economic resources.

3) Political Factors

Another compounding factor is the political structure of some rural communities. For example, Bachrach (1981) has suggested that political power may be vested in an "elite" portion of the population not especially sensitive to the needs of the underprivileged. Residents may lack the sophistication and/or knowledge or simply the time and resources to lobby on their own behalf. It may only be in those communities where someone directly in favour of social services is on the municipal council that such services will be provided. Murray and Keller (1982) suggest that, to a greater extent than in urban areas, rural community leaders must be directly involved in the development of services. Herwig (1983) advocates that planners should include representatives from all sectors of the areas being served (including industry, business, politics, farming, church and private interests) in the development process.

It is also important that service planners and personnel fully understand the power relationships of the various community institutions and interests -- a single group may have disproportionate influence and can therefore not be ignored.

4) Staffing

The staffing of rural social service programs can present difficulties in recruitment, training and orientation. The rural worker must be attuned to the economic conditions, political structures and the needs and life styles

of the population to be served. The worker will need special skills in working with scarce resources and in identifying both the formal and informal political/social networks in the community. S/he must also be able to deal with the relative absence of colleagues in rural areas and with the high visibility of both the client and the worker. A rural community almost always entails high visibility of persons and service structures. This can in some instances lead to reluctance on the part of the client and additional pressures on the life of the worker.

The role of the flexible generalist rather than specialist is thought to be most appropriate for personnel in rural areas -- due to lack of resources, smaller programs, and the broad nature of much of the work. A rural population usually cannot support a large number of specialists.

There sometimes tends to be an inequitable distribution of human service delivery personnel across rural and urban areas -- larger centres are often more attractive workplaces and most workers are urban trained and oriented. One suggestion in the literature is to effectively utilize indigenous paraprofessionals and/or "natural helpers". It is argued that the recruitment of interested rural lay people who understand the cultural, economic and political patterns of the community should help build community support and can also contribute to the local economy.

5) Values and Attitudes: Rural-Urban Differences

A more subtle barrier to service delivery relates to biases and attitudes held by both urban and rural planners and communities. Coward (1983) for example, argues that for the most part urban concepts and concerns have dominated the planning and delivery of services in both urban and rural areas. Programs have been designed with little or no attempt to define the particular lifestyles, needs, situations or goals of rural clients. Bachrach (1981) suggests that there is an urban bias even in the area of needs assessment and evaluation (the effectiveness of a program or of a service in terms of the number of clients served may be different in urban and rural settings -- lower population densities and transportation problems must be taken into account -- and this has an impact on the allocation of resources).

Social service planners have also been accused of subscribing to the myth of an idyllic rural life in which problems needing human services are seen as less severe in rural communities than in urban centres. Smith and Coward (1981) have suggested that many of the widely held beliefs about rural families are based on images of fictional farm life. However, it is a distortion to characterize farm life as idyllic or to characterize the rural family as only the farm family. Similarly, as Smith and Coward (1981) have noted, it is inaccurate to portray the family in rural areas as only the traditional nuclear family with built-in support from extended family members.

While rural life clearly offers some advantages, it also can produce environmental and psychological stresses. Many of the problems related to poverty and marital break-down do not respect rural-urban boundaries. Partly because of unfounded assumptions that a rural life is automatically

conducive to the development of 'sound mind and body' and partly because of isolation (cultural and geographic), many needs for services have been neglected. Also low utilization rates of existing rural services may be regarded as evidence that rural families enjoy a better quality of life and have less need -- rather than as possible evidence of inappropriate services, attitudinal differences, etc. Those living in rural areas often have to cope with such factors as isolation, dependence on seasons, weather, and climate and are therefore probably more "stressed" than their urban counterparts by the environment in which they live.

Thus the rural family is not simply the urban family in a more placid setting or the urban family spending a week-end in the country. Nor is there homogeneity among rural families. Rural areas are often ethnically diverse, with a high degree of mobility and migration. In discussing the rural family in the United States, Smith and Coward (1981) have posed the question whether -- given increasing divorce rates and labour force participation by women and decreasing fertility in rural areas -- rural families are becoming more like urban families. Their answer: "Many of the changes that have been witnessed in urban families have their parallels in families who reside in small towns and rural communities. It is as if the two are riding on parallel but different roads - going in the same direction but remaining on distinctly different paths".

One implication of this for social service delivery is that services now available in urban areas are needed in rural communities but must be tailored and refined to suit rural life. It is also the case that some needs may be exacerbated because of the rural context in which they occur. For example, the problems of one-parent families may be compounded to the extent that divorce is frowned upon and if an extended family is not available, finding supports may be especially difficult. Another example is emergency-crisis service in rural areas. Those in crisis are more isolated, but also potentially more visible if they seek help. Travel to emergencies may involve long distances and both on-call and back-up personnel are needed.

Although farmers do not typify rural life or even account for a large percentage of rural inhabitants, it is important to note that they often have some unusual "stressors" in their lives. Rosenblatt and Anderson (1981) suggest that one potential stressor is the likelihood that on a farm, family members work together. They argue that in the short term this may produce tension due to too much 'togetherness,' the necessity of mutual dependence, or problems of balancing parent-child and work relationships. In the long term, problems of the division of labour and income, retirement and intergenerational disagreements may surface. Other sources of stress include invariant work requirements, climate, and seasonal variation in money flow. Rosenblatt and Anderson (1981) argue that decision making may be more stressful since many family decisions are often central to the family's livelihood and this is compounded by the current economic crisis in farming. Also the potential for accidents is high in farming and high levels of tension may be both a cause and effect of farm accidents. While many of these factors may not be unique to farming, taken together they provide an indication that farm families do not lead a placid, idyllic and problem-free life.

The previous discussion has centred on problems related to the perceptions and attitudes of urbanites with respect to rural needs and life styles. However, rural attitudes have to be taken into account as well in planning service delivery. A basic question is whether attitudes and values differ between rural and urban populations and how this might relate to social services. In summing up evidence from national polls and studies conducted in the United States over the past 20 years, Wilkinson (1982) draws two conclusions. One is that despite a general trend toward convergence, value differences still persist between urban and rural groups. The second is that the diversity of attitudes has increased in rural communities, making it inappropriate to make broad generalizations about rural attitudes and values. Nonetheless, it is still useful to discuss those areas where values are most likely to diverge. Commonly identified "rural values" include the following themes: emphasis on hard work, mastery of the environment, the importance of family and community ties, conformity to group norms, traditional moral standards and more conservative political views. It has also been argued that rural populations are more religious, isolationist, and fatalistic. As noted already, however, these are rather weak differences which will vary from rural area to rural area.

Also people frequently migrate between urban and rural settings creating the potential for conflict between value systems and pressures to adapt and change. A social service worker who is not part of the rural culture must therefore be sensitive to attitudes and values as well as to the political and economic structure of the community. With respect to the form that social services take, Jackson (1983) has suggested that many rural people tend to relate to people and needs rather than agencies and programs and that assistance is thought of as personal. This has implications for the way in which programs are set up and advertised and for the special skills needed by the rural worker.

6) Rural "Advantages"

Thus far the focus has been on barriers to service in rural communities. However, some of the factors unique to rural areas can also be turned to possible advantage in setting up and evaluating social service programs. Natural support systems are often better integrated and easier to reach in rural communities. There is often a strong sense of community and an emphasis on local responsibility. Many people suggest that the natural helping patterns and networks that exist in the community should be reinforced and incorporated into service planning and delivery. Bachrach (1981) has also suggested that high visibility can be converted into a tool for the informal assessment of community needs and program satisfaction. Small self-contained communities may also have knowledgeable key informants who can help with assessment. High visibility may also lead to greater attention being paid to each case and greater flexibility in approach. The smaller scale of rural programs can make co-ordination of services easier and allow for more access to follow-up information. The social cohesiveness of a community may also provide a climate in which it is easier to get citizens involved in the planning and reviewing of services.

7) Integration and Flexibility

There are two major principles repeatedly discussed in the literature relevant to providing services in rural areas: integration and flexibility. The co-ordination and integration of services is seen as a method of coping with limited personnel and financial resources and of eliminating duplication. The expectations are: lower administrative costs, lower overhead, and more efficient allocation of staff. This contributes to a maximum return on investment. The integration of a variety of agencies and programs can also serve to promote more direct entry and a greater political power base. An excellent example of the possible benefits of co-ordination can be seen in terms of transportation. A common thread running through every rural social service program is the need for transportation. If transportation needs are built into individual programs the result can be a number of mini-transportation systems, with each agency having a van, cars, maybe even a bus. Such a system is expensive and inefficient -- the service may be under-utilized and/or run at only limited times. Pooling existing transportation "assets" into a broader based system can result in a situation where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts -- there will be less waste of personnel, fuel and vehicles. When planning transportation for a program in any rural area, the transportation needs of the entire social services community should be taken into account.

Despite the many clear advantages to integrating and co-ordinating social services in rural areas, there are potential pit-falls. As Bachrach points out different kinds of service providers may value their specialities and agencies their identities. In a pluralistic society one might want to avoid the monopolies that can result from a lack of varied providers and agencies in rural areas. It is also possible that homogeneous service planning may serve no one effectively in the attempt to serve everyone -- there is a substantial range of differences in needs and preferences for kinds of service and more differentiated and focused programs are likely to be more responsive to this range. Too much emphasis on the goal of integration may divert people from the goal of providing service, especially since the establishment of a common delivery agency is not simple. Coward (1983) has also noted that while many rural service agencies in the U.S. have established an integrated office in one community, this does not ensure appropriate outreach to other neighbouring -- and usually smaller -- communities. It is clear, however, that the planning and delivery of new services should enhance and supplement and not supplant the existing services and natural helping systems in the area. Also, although integration of services is probably necessary in most cases, it should be undertaken sensitively and carefully.

Flexibility is another basic tenet to rural social service planning. Practitioners must have the freedom to match programs with local needs and programs must be flexible enough to take advantage of existing resources in a given community. Thus there is a need to assess the flexibility of program requirements and regulations in terms of their potential fit with diverse rural conditions. A common complaint in rural areas is that the "rules" are made by and apply to urbanites. A simple example, already noted, is that rural programs may not be able to attract and/or afford specialists, but could make use of indigenous paraprofessionals or natural helpers -- as long as there were no "regulatory

barriers." A related issue is that the co-ordination of programs and personnel often involves the crossing of jurisdictions (e.g., health and social services) -- often a particularly troublesome barrier.

8) Rural Models

A number of models for the provision of social services have been proposed and implemented (these will be discussed very briefly and generally here, and more consideration will be given later to child care models specifically).

The use of generalists and indigeneous paraprofessionals has already been discussed. One disadvantage of the generalist is s/he may sometimes only be able to provide referrals rather than actual service, i.e., there will be instances where specialized help is necessary. Satellite programs provide another model -- a scaled down extension of an agency is located in a small community or a worker living in one community may be employed by an agency in another community and can therefore access the back-up and resources of the agency. The "circuit rider" is another approach -- a service specialist or multiservice team associated with a centralized agency travels from community to community. These models depend to a great extent on the relationships established between the workers and the communities, on the commitment of the "home-base" agency and on consistency of personnel.

9) Rural Child Care

The preceding discussion has outlined, in general terms, many of the issues involved in delivering rural social services. The same themes re-emerge with respect to child care. Historically, rural families have used home-centred child care. Brown (1978) suggests that a number of factors enter into this choice: a widely scattered population makes access to child care centres difficult, especially when transportation problems and climatic factors are also present; small population bases cannot support large centres and small centres are often not economically viable; there has been little experience with centre-based programs and there is a reluctance to entrust child care to a "public", "institutionalized" program; providing care for children in a home is seen as more compatible with the traditional norms of rural society.

Brown (1978) has also pointed out that evaluating and searching for child care is a new problem for many rural parents -- there are more women in the work force due to both choice and economic necessity and, on the whole, the extended family is less available for child care. Lack of child care can affect participation in the labour market and decreased or inadequate income can encourage family breakdown and thus increase welfare roles. The need for child care thus becomes a prevention and community issue.

Shoffner (1979) found that in addition to employment and economic factors, rural mothers in North and South Carolina wanted child care for their own and their children's personal development. Many rural homemakers felt their children were bored and they themselves were out of touch with the

outside world (rural mothers and their children are often quite isolated). Some of the child care problems identified by rural parents include: having to make different arrangements for each child; lack of care for infants and special needs children; lack of facilities for school age children and adolescents; inconvenient hours; cost; transportation difficulties; arrangements for sick children.

Vanzandt and Bosworth (1968) suggested that in farm families with mothers working off the farm, child care is often entrusted to the father who cannot really provide adequate care while doing farm work. They also suggest that the extended family may not always provide adequate care, at least in those situations where relatives feel they are being imposed upon.

The most frequently suggested "solution" regarding rural child care is to provide support for the most widely used form of care -- family or home care. Herwig (1983) suggested that the primary goal should be to provide supports to the home child care provider "in an attempt to stablize and improve quality of care and to foster the provision of more than custodial care." There is a need for communications with providers, the development of support systems between existing agencies and providers and community visibility of a viable child care network. The area of child care is an excellent one for the recruitment and involvement of local people as the skills involved are consonant with rural values and attitudes. It has been argued that training and support are important, however, and should utilize local resources as much as possible.

A single entry system for accessing child care is desirable, based on the notion of integration of services. In noting that a common delivery agency is not easy to set up Herwig (1983) suggested that perhaps an established respected organization could expand to deliver child care "since innovations seem more easily implemented when they take place within an established organization that has community acceptance and understanding." Vanzandt and Bosworth (1968) suggested that churches could provide space; industry and hospitals could establish facilities; schools could provide before and after school programs with older students looking after younger ones; employers could provide child care registries.

In summary, discussions of rural child care do not differ from the more general discussions of rural social service delivery. The problems of transportation, isolation, low population density, cost, and attitudes are common themes. Suggested strategies involve use of local personnel and facilities, integration of services and building on existing values and preferences. There is also general agreement that urban models will not provide rural solutions.

III. DEFINITION

There is no clear and non-arbitrary way to define the term "rural". The following is a discussion of some of the issues and difficulties involved in the attempt at definition and some of the definitions that have been put forward.

1) General Considerations

Miller and Luloff (1981) have maintained that the "term rural is conventionally employed to denote a delimited geographical area, characterized by a population that is small, unconcentrated and relatively isolated from the influence of large metropolitan centres." This has the advantage of conforming to common sense usage. However, as Matthews and Heuvel (1985) have pointed out, the use of this definition often means that the term is not explicitly operationalized and is used to refer to any setting outside a metropolitan area. They have also noted that lack of an accepted, precise definition makes it difficult to reach any definite conclusions from the research on rural problems, since the term rural often means different things in different studies.

Matthews and Heuval (1985) have maintained that the diverse nature of rural environments must be taken into account. Further, rural-urban differences exist not only in terms of geographic isolation and low population density, but also in the "persistence of a distinct culture".

Bealer, Willits and Kuvlesky (1965), have suggested that historically there have been three aspects to the meaning of the term rural: ecological, occupational and socio-cultural. It was assumed that these three factors were highly intercorrelated. However, "time has eroded the simple interconnectedness between these facets of the American rural scene." Bealer et. al (1965) suggested that the search for a definition should be abandoned in favour of a search for "objective indicators" of community differences.

There are some characteristics clearly shared by rural communities. Low population density is one, but the exact point at which a particular population is rural versus urban is clearly arbitrary. Relatively large distances between or to a population centre is another characteristic, but the size of the centre and actual number of kilometres again remains arbitrary. Also, this begs the question of defining the points of reference in determining isolation. Bealer et. al (1965) have pointed out that absolute isolation for any geographical area is currently rare. They suggested that some criteria for relative isolation might be that communication is not instantaneous and transportation involves real cost.

It is also important to note that the degree to which characteristics describe rural areas will differ regionally. For example, difficulties and isolation created by winter weather conditions are factors describing most of rural Ontario, but will be particularly characteristic of the north. And

as Matthews and Heuvel (1965) have noted, rural life in the north may be different because it is embedded in an even more rural environmental context than life in the south. They suggested that characteristics that may be idiosyncratic to Northern Canada are "limited economy, migration patterns and the presence of single industry towns."

Sociocultural or value differences will also vary. Miller and Luloff (1981) found that residence at age 16 was a better predictor of rural attitudes than current residence. Therefore, rural communities that are populated primarily by those reared in rural areas will be different from communities in which there are a large number of urban immigrants. While this may not be important for a definition of "rural" when the issue involves services such as transportation, it is crucial for issues such as child care where attitudes and values play a major role.

The occupational structure of an area is no longer a clear defining characteristic of rural versus urban communities. Historically, the term rural was almost synonomous with the major economic base being agricultural production or at least some other form of primary production, such as forestry or mining. This aspect of rurality has not disappeared. However, as Keller and Murray (1982) have pointed out, "there has been an expansion of what was once considered urban technology into rural areas." There has also been considerable growth in recreation and retirement communities and activities as well as educational institutions.

In 1979 the Canadian Rural Development Council (CRDC) convened a workshop to discuss the Statistics Canada definition of "rural". One of the points made in the CRDC report (to be discussed in more detail below) was that "neither farming alone or all primary activities, expresses fully the meaning of rural. Farmers work in urban centres; urbanities live in the countryside. Primary resource activities such as forestry and mining are largely based on urban technology transplanted into the rural environment. Farm operations are business enterprises just as much as most small private businesses in the urban centres. Demographic and socioeconomic variety may be equally as great."

2) CRDC Report

The current Canadian census definition of "rural" is a population centre of less than 1,000 where the density is less than 400 persons per square kilometre. The Canadian Rural Development Council has published the proceedings of a 1979 workshop convened to assess this definition and generate a more adequate one. It was thought that the current definition is residual and negative and that the current population threshold of 1000 is too low. (It is interesting to note that despite much research and debate no changes were made subsequent to the workshop, possibly because there was no clear consensus on an alternative non-arbitrary definition).

Some of the points made in the CRDC report are as follows:

The current definition establishes a dichotomy where there should be a continuum and the number of factors that must be taken into account suggests a multi-variable rather than a unidimensional definition. Thus, for

example, one suggestion was that the term rural should include areas where primary production activities are practiced as well as small "urban" places that provide services to primary resource areas. It was also pointed out, however, that multi-variable classifications can raise as many problems as they solve -- What are the key variables? What weighting procedures should be used? What classification techniques? etc.

Classification based on service levels was also suggested. This would reflect directly one of the major concerns of rural development -- bringing rural service levels up to urban standards. It was suggested that the threshold level at which more "urban services" become prevalent is between 2,000 and 5,000. "Various studies have shown that a population size of between 2,000 and 5,000 allows the economic provision of certain types of businesses and services (both public and private) which would not be feasible in smaller places. However, choice of any threshold remains arbitrary, particularly when one recognizes regional variations in the conditions under which services are provided".

The CRDC report cited work done by D'Costa who maintained that "the broad similarities in many socio-economic characteristics between rural non-farm areas and smaller urban localities indicates that a relevant definition of rural should encompass rural farm and non-farm areas of up to 10,000 population".

The report also cited studies done by Parenteau who suggested that the characteristics of rural and urban populations meet and overlap in population centres of between 8,000 and 10,000 people (although this will depend on settlement patterns, the distance to a larger population centre and therefore on the kinds of services the small centre is expected to provide to the surrounding area.) Parenteau has provided the following continuum: urban, pseudo urban, rural non-farm and rural farm. Precise definitions were not given, however.

A category of "remote areas" was also suggested in the report. This would include population densities of less than one person per square kilometre which would certainly provide particularly difficult problems for service delivery.

The issue of regional diversity was stressed and the point that rural is more than agricultural was repeatedly made. It was also pointed out that rural areas close to major cities are very different from those in more remote areas. Perhaps the point that best summarizes the CRDC report is the statement made regarding the distinction - -"rural and urban areas are so intermixed that a sharp demarcation is impossible".

3) MCSS Survey

A rural child care survey was circulated to Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) area office staff and included a question regarding the definition of the term rural (the general results of this survey will be discussed in a later section of this report.) The following list represents many of the ideas on definition generated through the survey:

Farm communities with a low population density; bedroom communities; single industry towns (population approximately 6,000); larger towns (more than 6,000 population) with no public transportation; retirement communities; small villages and towns (up to 8,000 population); being more than a 30 minute drive from a large population centre (versus 15 minutes or less); population centres of less than 30,000. The preceding list does not include the suggestions made by field staff in the North, which were: remote areas accessible only by air; communities with no access to transportation; being further than 100 km from a population centre; everything other than the five population centres of 60,000 or more.

These lists indicate the range of possibilities and factors that must be taken into account as well as the regional differences in the province.

4) Suggested Typology

It seems clear that some sort of continuum or typology will serve better than a simple division between urban and rural communities. It might be useful to think of a) remote areas (reached primarily by air); b) communities of less than 1,000 (the current census definition); c) those between 1,000 and 10,000 (the population sometimes cited in the literature as distinguishing rural from urban service levels); d) small "urban" centres between 10,000 and 30,000 (the population that seems to designate the term "city" to many people); and e) urban centres -- 30,000 plus. However, the latter category also needs to be broken down -- certainly cities like Brockville are dramatically different from metropolitan centres like Toronto. This typology (as arbitrary as any other) is based solely on population -- except for the concept of remote areas. This is obviously not adequate. However, the other factors such as distance to a larger centre, availability of transportation, etc., need to be dealt with in context since all of these factors are highly interactive. Perhaps the most important factor is a "psychological" one -- the extent to which people in the community identify themselves as rural.

The typology that has just been suggested consists of more than five categories (the number will depend on how urban centres are broken down). While this might seem unwieldly it should be noted that each category is based on a particular factor (remoteness, service level, etc.). For any given issue in which it is important to look at rural areas, some factors will be more important than others and categories can be combined -- or further refined. It is important to remember that there is no single point at which 'urban' ends and 'rural' begins. This review has clearly not provided an answer to the question of how to define the term rural. However, hopefully some of the issues and factors that have been discussed and used in the suggested typology will help to generate more meaningful information than what would be obtained from a simple dichotomy.

IV. INTERVIEWS AND SURVEYS

This section of the paper contains summaries of a number of interview and survey studies of rural child care. In some instances child care was the major focus of the investigation, in others it was a more peripheral concern. Taken together, the studies cover a wide range of circumstances and respondents. As already noted in the Introduction, each study is described separately.

1) Farm Interviews

In August 1985, 26 farm women in five counties were interviewed by the auther on their child care needs and preferences. The five counties were: Oxford, Algoma, Huron, Frontenac and Durham. The interviews were arranged by staff from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. The farm women were interviewed at their farms -- the interview consisted of a series of open ended questions regarding current child care arrangements, perceived need for child care, satisfaction, difficulties, and preferences.

All but one family had children under 10 years old and 69% of the families had children under five. Of the 26 farms, 13 were solely dairy, four were solely cash crop, and two were solely livestock. Seven were a combination of operations -- e.g., cash crop plus livestock, dairy plus livestock, etc. With respect to the work status of the farm women, three said they did some farm work, usually bookeeping, 16 worked either full (11) or part time (5) on the farm, six worked off the farm part time and on the farm part time, while one had a full time off-farm job.

For 13 families the mother and/or father provided most of the child care. Care provided by fathers most often meant that the children were taken to the barn and/or the fields. In nine instances mothers were helped out by relatives - usually grandparents, but sometimes older siblings, aunts, uncles. Only four families used in-home "sitters", day care centres, or brought their children to day care homes. Some mothers had sent or were sending their children to nursery school - usually two mornings or afternoons a week, but this was seen as a socialization activity for the children and/or a break for the mother rather than "care."

Many of the mothers were themselves involved in child care because they perceived that their children needed to be at home with their parents -- some objected to nursery or prekindergarten on the grounds that this was too early to remove the child from the direct influence of the family. However, in many instances, alternate forms of care were simply not available.

One of the major issues in farm child care is safety. There was, however, a mixed reaction to this among the mothers interviewed. Eight families made it a point not to take their children either to the barn or the fields, and four families took their children just to the barn. However, in 14 families (54%) children accompanied their parents to both the barn and the

fields. Of the 20 families who talked directly about safety 14 saw farms as dangerous,while seven minimized the danger, pointing to the city as a more dangerous environment for children.

While there was not complete unanimity on safety, most families who perceived a need for child care indicated that the need was most pronounced during peak work periods on the farm. This was due to safety factors and to the stress involved in trying to do farm work and keep an eye on the children simultaneously. All of the mothers were asked if they would prefer farm help or child care help during peak periods and 19 (73%) had a clear preference for help with child care. They indicated that they saw farm work as their job, that they wanted to be full partners in the farm operation, that it was often very difficult to train workers to use expensive farm equipment. Those who preferred the farm help tended to be less involved in farm work themselves.

In discussing who they felt could/should care for their children during peak periods 21 mothers mentioned qualifications. Of these, 19 (90%) said they did not think special training was necessary -- they wanted someone who had some experience with children and who liked children. Knowledge of farm safety and first aid were also seen as important. However, only two mothers saw a need for specialized child care training.

Cost of child care is an issue for many farm families, especially given the current economic crisis in farming. While it is widely believed that farm families would not be willing to apply for subsidies for child care, there were mixed reactions among the mothers interviewed. Sixteen mothers said they would not object to filling out an application to determine their eligibility for a subsidy; six said they would object; and four indicated that it would depend on the circumstances. Any indication that this was a "welfare" service was met with negative reactions from almost all of the mothers.

Another widespread belief is that the extended family is typically available for child care in farm families -- and this was the case for just over a third of the families interviewed. However of the 12 mothers who discussed their parents or parents-in-law as actual or potential care-givers, six either had difficulty with the situation or had chosen not to do it while the other six were neutral to positive. Reasons for difficulties were the reluctance of the relatives (they would rather be leading their own lives -- or at least some of the mothers interviewed perceived the situation in this way); distance to relatives; too much togetherness, etc.

In discussing the difficulties in providing child care to farm families almost all of the mothers saw the hours care was needed and transportation as major barriers. Ten miles seemed to be the maximum distance mothers were willing to travel. Sixteen mothers indicated that it was difficult to find help when it was needed. Eighteen mothers indicated a preference for care in their own home and of the 24 who mentioned day care centres 15 (62%) said they would not use one even if it were available. Centre care was seen as "institutionalized." Several mothers mentioned a lack of services for "special needs" children. (In the context of this report the term "special needs" refers to a broad spectrum -- children who do not speak the dominant language, children with learning disabilities,

hyperactive, emotionally disturbed, developmentally delayed and physically handicapped children).

The negative reaction to day care centres relates to the issue of values and attitudes discussed above regarding nursery school. Many of the mothers felt that if people other than themselves were going to be caring for their children, that the care should conform to a family-oriented situation. Eighteen mothers described family life on the farm as "special" and did not want their children to miss out on the experience. Nineteen discussed isolation, with 11 seeing farm children as isolated from peers, while the others felt it was not an issue. Many of those who felt their young children were isolated were interested in nursery and recreation programs.

With respect to attitudes, it is important to note that five of the families (19%) clearly stated that they had no need or desire for any form of child care -- they certainly did not want any government involvement.

It should, of course, not be surprising that there is a range of attitudes and viewpoints.

2) Grey County Farm Survey

The results of the five-county interviews are strikingly similar to those from a child care survey done of 64 farm families in Grey County in June/July 1985. The survey was conducted by Cheryl Hopkins for Grey-Owen Sound Social and Family Services. Mothers were asked what type of situation they would like for their children regarding day care -- 34% indicated that an in-their-own-home program would be best; 24% said they did not want any form of day care - primarily because of cost, but in some instances because of a belief that "a mother's place is in the home"; 22% wanted a home provider - presumably someone providing private home day care; and 20% wanted day care centres.

Hopkins reported that 20% of the mothers expressed the view that family closeness was special and important, although some commented on isolation as an issue for farm children. Hopkins felt that "many women do not realize the risks involved by having their children around constantly on the farm during peak periods." However 73% of the mothers reported feeling stressed about the situations in which they left their children when working during peak periods. Of these, 74% felt that their work performance was affected.

A large number of the women were not concerned about formal child care qualifications -- although they wanted care givers who were "competent, caring, willing to give the children ideas of what to do and to watch for the children's safety."

A higher percentage of the Grey sample (51%) used extended family for child care. Hopkins suggested that the use of extended family may be

related to the value placed on having the caregiver be someone knowledgeable about farming and rural life.

Many women expressed a desire for help with child care rather than farm work during peak periods and 64% said they needed sporadic, flexible child care.

As already noted, the two interview surveys generated very similar findings. Both indicate a need for flexible child care for farm families, especially during peak periods and both indicate the diversity of views on child care in the farm community.

3) OMAF News Survey

In October, 1985 a rural day care questionnaire written by the author, was published in OMAF (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food) News, which is circulated to over 80,000 farm families in Ontario. Only 181 people responded. However, October is still a very busy time for most farmers and response to this kind of survey is typically low. While the response rate cannot be taken as an overwhelming indication of need for child care, it must not be understood as the opposite. The results of the survey indicate some interesting patterns and issues regarding child care needs and preferences in farm families.

Of the total 181 respondents, data for 175 have been tabulated. In many instances not all respondents answered all questions and therefore the percentages reported below cannot readily be turned into frequencies. However, in most cases reporting percentages rather than actual numbers seemed more meaningful.

Almost all respondents (92%) were mothers and were married (97%).

The median number of children in each family was two. The median age of the target child (the child in the family whose child care arrangements were being described) was three years and target children were almost evenly divided between girls (48%) and boys (52%).

Most of the female respondents were working -- either on or off the farm. 48% worked either full or part-time off the farm; 37% worked either full or part-time on the farm; and the remaining 15% indicated that they were homemakers (it should be noted that over 40% of those who worked off the farm did farm work as well and it is quite possible that many "homemakers" were involved in the farm operation).

Approximately 90% of respondents were farmers. The median farm size was 130-399 acres and the sample represented a wide variety of farm operations throughout the province.

The most common form of child care was a combination of arrangements. The child was taken care of solely by a parent at home in only seven percent of families and solely by a caregiver in another home in 11% of families. Using a combination of these two arrangements (parent at home plus caregiver in caregiver's home) accounted for 19% of respondents. The

combination of the child's own parents plus someone other than parents in the child's home accounted for 10% of child care arrangements. A combination of three arrangements was used by 15% of respondents. Six percent combined care by parents at home with the use of a child care program -- e.g., day care or nursery.

Of those who travelled to a child care arrangement, 52% travelled for less than 10 minutes, 34% travelled between 10 and 20 minutes, and only 14 travelled for more than 20 minutes. While the majority of parents (65%) had not changed their main method of child care over the last year, almost a quarter had made two or more changes.

It is interesting to look at the relation between child care arrangements and satisfaction -- unfortunately the number of respondents is too small to make these relations more than suggestive. 90% of those whose children were cared for by a caregiver in another home were very or somewhat satisfied with the arrangement. The least satisfied parents (39%) were those using the combination of parents plus someone other than parents in the home.

The results regarding satisfaction for other arrangements were: parent in the home plus a child care program -- 82%; parent in the home plus a caregiver in another home -- 71%; the three arrangements of parents in the home, someone other than parents in the home, plus a caregiver in another home -- 62%; solely by parents in the home -- 54%. It would seem that higher levels of satisfaction are found in those arrangements where the child is not at home all of the time.

Overall, 69% of respondents said they were somewhat or very satisfied with their current child care arrangements. However, 74% indicated that there were child care services not available that they would like to have -- drop-in centres, day care centres, in-home child care, or some combination of these services were mentioned most frequently. This is consistent with the fact that only 22% said they would <u>not</u> consider using a day care centre, care in a neighbour's home, or a drop-in centre if it were available.

In terms of problems or impediments to service, only four per cent indicated there were none -- they already had the best arrangement. 55% indicated that finding people to provide care was a problem, 46% indicated cost, 40% indicated a lack of facilities to which they could take their children and 30% indicated time when care was needed. 18% indicated that travelling time was a problem, 15% indicated finding out what was available, and only 10% indicated availability of transportation.

Respondents were asked what might help communities provide more and better child care. 63% wanted additional approved supervised child care home services, i.e., licensed people taking care of children in their home; 62% wanted a referral service where parents could get information about screened and qualified people and agencies to provide child care; 35% wanted additional day care centres, 33% wanted a monitoring system to check on caregivers and facilities; 30% wanted training for caregivers; and 28% wanted summer recreational programs for children (Respondents were asked to check as many of these options they thought were relevant).

Responses to the questions involving safety and taking children to the fields and barn revealed an interesting pattern. 44% of respondents said that their children were taken to the fields/barn every day -- of these, 60% indicated that they considered this to be somewhat or very dangerous.

The comparable numbers for respondents taking their children to the fields/barn at least once a week were 22% and 66%; once a month, 15% and 67%; and never, 19% and 81%.

It is not surprising that respondents who never took their children to the fields/barn were most likely to rate this as a dangerous thing to do. However, it is important to note the majority of respondents who did take their children also saw this as dangerous -- it is probable that these parents would find the situation quite stressful. It should also be noted that these results are congruent with the five county and Grey county surveys.

While some of those taking their children to the fields/barn indicated that the danger was minimal, the majority of farm parents viewed the farm as a potentially dangerous place for their children.

Another result consistent with the interview survey was the response to the question regarding child care subsidy -- of those in the OMAF survey who saw the question as relevant, 87% indicated that they would have no objection to filling out an application to determine their eligibility for subsidy, six per cent said they might object under some circumstances and seven per cent said they would object. Thus, there does not seem to be any overwhelming negative response to the issue of subsidy. Under "additional comments", four respondents did indicate that they were against any government involvement in child care -- and an additional five were generally negative regarding any child care programs -- the rest of the comments were either neutral (12 respondents) or positive, indicating a need for child care (47 respondents).

4) WSA Survey

In November 1985, Women for the Survival of Agriculture (WSA) submitted a report to the Second National Farm Women's Conference. The report, researched and written by Susan Watkins under the direction of Dianne Harkin, was entitled "What are you worth: a study of the economic contribution of Eastern Ontario farm women to the family farm enterprise". Based on a survey of 248 farm women in Eastern Ontario, the report focussed mainly on the economic value of farm women's work. However, Watkins included a section on issues of concern to farm women, and child care was one of these issues. (It should be noted that most of the material on child care in this report was based on secondary sources rather than actual data from the survey, in which this was not a focus.)

Watkins pointed out that "dissatisfaction with the provision of rural child care has recently become an issue with farm women". She suggested that some of the reasons for the development of this focus on child care include: the current economic crisis in farming which has meant that many women have taken off-farm jobs (30% of respondents in this survey had off-farm jobs); the decreasing number of extended family members

available for child care; and the current use of dangerous chemicals making it more dangerous than it used to be to take children to the fields and barn.

Watkins cited a National Farmers' Union study which found that "52% of farm women surveyed were totally dissatisfied with the provision of rural child care, while a further 18% were generally satisfied. Only 15% were in some way satisfied, while 15% were neutral on the issue of availability of child care".

Watkins suggested that lack of child care prevents farm women from taking training courses and obtaining jobs and contributes to farm accidents.

Issues identified in providing child care to rural farm families were: the time when care is needed in terms of seasonal variations and long days; transportation and distance; the need for emergency care, especially in winter when the bussing of children is often unreliable; the need for school age programs -- latchkey children may be at greater risk due to isolation, long lanes in winter (from the bus to the house) and the potentially dangerous nature of the farm; the cost of quality child care, especially given current low farm incomes and the difficulty farm families have in obtaining child care subsidies; the resistance of local politicians who often do not see the need for rural child care services.

5) CFW Survey

In 1983, Concerned Farm Women (CFW) published a survey undertaken to "determine and document the extent of financial and psychological stress among farm families". The report was written by Gisele Ireland and was based on the responses of 343 farm women in Grey County to a questionnaire sent out by mail. One-third of respondents were currently working off the farm, the majority did regular or frequent farm work and almost all respondents were involved in the financial management of the farm.

Children and child care were not a major focus of the report. However, Ireland did indicate that farm women were clearly responsible for child care and the majority (53%) took children under 12 with them when they were occupied with farm work -- 4% left children playing in the field or barn; 10% left them alone in the house; 16% left them with older siblings; only 7% hired a sitter. 10% indicated that the children helped with farm work. Many respondents indicated that they did not feel their children who were operating farm equipment were adequately trained -- this was especially true among farm families in financial distress.

6) Task Force Report and Farm Safety Association Statistics

The surveys done by Women for the Survival of Agriculture and Concerned Farm Women as well as the interviews and OMAF questionnaire all point to farm safety as a major issue creating a need for child care services. The Report of the Ontario Task Force on Health and Safety in Agriculture substantiates this concern. The report indicated that briefs were presented expressing concerns about farm children left unattended while parents do

farm work and concerns about young children frequently found in the workplace, because no child care was available. Recognizing that the "problem of child care on farms is complex", the Task Force did not make specific recommendations, but did support the child care recommendation contained in Molly McGhee's report on rural women. The Task Force therefore concluded "that an assessment of child care on farms be conducted and that the barriers to suitable programs be addressed. From the limited discussion of the topic in the Task Force hearings, it (the Task Force) believes the matter deserves urgent attention."

Statistics provided by the Ontario Farm Safety Assocation graphically add to concerns for children's safety on farms. Between 1975 and 1984, 84 children under the age of 15 died in farm accidents -- 37 of these children were under 5 years. 65% of these fatalities occurred during the peak period months May to September. 40% were tractor accidents; 13% involved other farm machinery; 13% were falls from farm wagons; 10% were grain suffocation. These figures represent only the "tip of the iceburg", since the Association has data only on fatalities and not on accidents. It can only be assumed that for every fatality there are a substantial number of accidents ranging from minor "hurts" to very serious impairments.

The farm community claims that accidents will increase as more and more women take off-farm jobs, leaving their spouses to take the children to the barn and the fields or as the women themselves become more involved in the farm operation.

7) OMAF Staff Survey

A telephone survey of Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF) rural organization specialists regarding child care needs of farm families was conducted by OMAF staff. Specialists in all four OMAF regions were contacted and there was general agreement across specialists and regions. The following were the main issues identified:

There is a real need for emergency child care services and for child care during peak periods.

The staff felt that most farm women, if given a choice, would prefer child care in their own homes. They also indicated that many farm women seemed reconciled to the fact that child care is very difficult to obtain and children are often left with relatives and neighbours.

A central registry, with a co-ordinator, providing a list of reputable child care givers, resource people and general resource materials was identified as a possible solution to finding adequate child care.

A need for infant care was also identified by some staff.

It was pointed out that some municipalities make it difficult for farm families to access day care centres, by imposing an extra fee on those living outside municipal boundaries.

Staff indicated that great stress is now being caused by declining farm incomes and this stress is being exacerbated by lack of child care facilities -- or if child care is available, by the parents' inability to pay.

A more general theme emerging from the survey was that rural and farm families require flexible child care with a wide range of options.

8) MCSS Staff Survey

A rural child care survey was circulated to the four Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) regional child care co-ordinators who in turn distributed it to relevant people in MCSS area offices. The survey asked for a general description of the area served by the field person and for a discussion of issues and problems surrounding the use and delivery of rural child care.

Although there were some differences in emphasis from region to region, there was a fair degree of consensus regarding rural child care.

There was agreement that there are insufficient child care services and that in all regions those living in rural communities rely predominately on informal care. Transportation, distance, cost, and time when care is needed, were cited as the major barriers. Conservative municipal councils and municipal discretion in general were frequently mentioned -- "Many of the municipalities do not want to support day care because the town councillors feel the women's place is in the home." In addition it was suggested that there is sometimes a lack of capacity and organization in the community to develop child care proposals and plan and set up services.

It was suggested several times that there is a resistance to formal care on the part of rural families, that the need to be formally incorporated to receive funding might hamper the development of programs and that, for example, the farm wife "doesn't want to mimic the career woman who places her children in outside care...", but still wants support and assistance with child care when it is needed. Thus the values and attitudes of rural families must be taken into account. A low tax base, lack of Early Childhood Education specialists and lack of active community lobbying were also mentioned.

Flexibility of services was the most basic need identified by virtually everyone. Flexibility in terms of hours when care is provided -- seasonal care, week-end care, part-time care, emergency care -- was clearly a perceived need in rural areas. A need for a more flexible approach to subsidies was also identified. Expansion of resource centres, drop-in centres, and private home day care (PHDC) was often suggested -- PHDC was seen as more appropriate and acceptable than traditional centre-based care. However, some respondents saw a need for workplace day care, for more small scale centres, and for the expansion of family group care. Drop-in centres for isolated mothers with young children at home were also suggested.

The range of children served in rural areas is clearly limited. Another recurrent theme in the surveys was the need for more infant and toddler care, enrichment programs and care for special needs children.

9) Wellington Survey and Workshop

In October 1985 the Wellington Rural Child Care Network co-ordinated a day of "information sharing" for service providers and consumers in Wellington County. Results of a survey done by the network were presented and several workshops were organized. The following is a brief summary of some of the relevant information and discussion on rural child care needs.

Summary of rural needs presentation:

Transportation was not cited as a major problem in the Wellington survey. Parents indicated that while they did want services to be locally accessible and community based, they were willing to drive up to 10 miles to get care.

Boundaries dividing service areas were not always geographic or political. People in Wellington county often defined boundaries in terms of emotional and personal ties.

The type of service families wanted was based on their value systems. Three groups were identified: immigrants, usually ex-urbanites, who have moved to the country; local families who have maintained traditional values; and local families who have not maintained traditional values. Immigrants had the weakest support networks and traditional families the strongest. It was suggested that these factors will affect the need for, and utilization of, various child care services.

The large number of rural women in the work force means that child care is no longer a rare occurance, it is now a necessity in rural communities.

Summary of family needs presentation:

Changes in family structure were noted. Close to 10% of families in Wellington County are headed by single parents and 300 teenagers in Wellington County have had babies in the last few years, and many are choosing to keep their children. Although most families in the survey preferred relatives as their main source of support, this was not always available and many families were isolated.

It was argued that these changes have resulted in a number of child care needs. Families in the survey indicated a need for drop-in centres -- as a place to socialize and as a place to leave their children for short periods of time. Farm families in particular wanted activities that matched their hours and many parents cited a need for learning parenting skills.

Summary of special needs presentation:

Servicing special needs children is often difficult in rural areas. Assessment is especially difficult. Parents have to recognize the need and

be willing to seek help -- often the traditional view is that special needs children are a source of shame. Accessing appropriate assessments can also be a problem since specialists are often not available and generalists may not have the appropriate skills. Subsequent to assessment, services and programs may not be locally available. Transportation is therefore often a problem. It is also difficult in many instances to find local people capable and interested in providing even occassional care for special needs children.

Summary of child care needs presentation:

It was argued that the need for child care in rural communities is "desperate and varied." Farm families' hours are long and variable and safety is an important issue. Many rural families do shift work, and/or commute long distances to work. Therefore child care must be available on a flexible basis.

Three types of care in the county were discussed: In-home care was preferred by farm families. Out-of-home was the second most preferred type of child care -- i.e., care provided in the residence of a caregiver. As noted before, transportation was not an issue if the distance were less than 10 miles. Centre-based care is extremely limited in the county. It was the preferred type of care by immigrants and the last choice of traditional families who did not trust centre care or think it had much to offer.

Emergency, temporary, and relief care are not easy to find in the County. Also lacking is before or after school programs and therefore many children spend this time as latch-key children.

Parents living and working in small towns in the county expressed a preference for work-based care.

Parents also had difficulty with occassional care and indicated that "sitters" under 16 are too young while those over 16 are often not interested.

Cost was another important factor with parents not wanting to spend more than $50-$60 a week.

There was general discussion of developing a child care registry as a means of improving the availability and quality of child care. However a number of potential barriers were noted particularly the reluctance of providers to become part of a registry system (issues were privacy, taxes, not wanting to be monitored, etc.). Also, although parents said they would use a registry many expressed a preference for people they already knew personally and whose references were known by them.

The concluding remarks in the Wellington survey point out that there are several major household types in the county: farm, rural residential and small town or village households. There are also single parent families and families with special needs children who will have distinct child care needs. These "types" when coupled with different value systems (traditional rural, non-traditional rural, and ex-urbanite or immigrant)

clearly indicate that varied and flexible child care services are necessary to accommodate the range of rural situations.

In summary, the response to the survey indicated a clear need for expanded rural child care services that are flexible and respond to rural values and conditions. The problems and issues identified paralleled those found in the literature and in other surveys: transportation, cost, distance, the local political structure, and a resistance to "urban" models. It is also interesting to note that there were more similarities than differences across regions.

10) General Rural Interviews

A series of interviews was conducted by the author with a variety of individuals living and working in rural Ontario. Some were done in person, many were conducted on the telephone. The individuals included MCSS field staff with experience in rural communities, child care providers living in small towns, interested parents and people involved with rural child care programs, OMAF personnel, etc. No attempt was made to generate a representative sample of respondents -- individuals were contacted based on recommendations and suggestions made to the author regarding possible "key informants." Interviews were informal and unstructured and were based on the circumstances of the interview and the particular expertise of the respondents.

A wide range of issues and concerns were raised. There was general consensus that there is a substantial need for flexible child care in rural communities. Many people indicated that rural families are often isolated, socially and physically, and that even when parents are not in the work force, both children and parents can benefit from some sort of organized activities. Respondents from the North, in particular, stressed the need for parent relief and socialization experiences for young children.

The work patterns of rural residents were often cited as creating problems regarding child care. Many people do shift work, making 9:00 - 5:00 child care inappropriate. Many people commute long distances to work (60-90 kilometres is not atypical). This means that longer hours of care are required. Additional flexibility is needed in winter months when weather conditions often mean parents will take extra time to return from work. Workplace child care is not necessarily the answer to this particular problem as many parents are unwilling to take their young children in the car with them for one to two hours a day or risk having their children with them in the car during bad winter weather. Many people in rural communities are involved in seasonal work, and therefore their child care requirements change throughout the year. Farmers clearly fall into this category (their concerns are covered in detail in other sections of the paper). Individuals working in the resort industry also fall into this category and during the tourist season they work long hours, usually six days a week. They are often in a situation where it is very difficult for them to transport their children to and from care.

Transportation was identified as a major issue in rural communities. When child care is available the distances may be substantial and public

transportation is very seldom available. Many rural families have only one vehicle (many may not even have one) and this can lead to problems if parents work in different places or if one parent takes the vehicle to work leaving the other "stranded" at home with the children.

It was pointed out that many people live in rural communities because housing is less expensive than it is in the "city". Rural incomes are often low. The cost of child care is a major factor for many families. Several respondents indicated that they knew of instances where mothers did not return to school or take jobs because of the high costs of child care.

Another issue frequently mentioned was that the low population density of many rural areas means that there are not enough young children to "support" a day care centre. This is true of many mining towns in the North. These communities are often isolated and accessing centres in larger communities is therefore not possible. Where day care centres are operating it is often the case that families living "out of town" are given very low priority and/or have to pay an additional fee. Thus access is often limited.

The need for emergency care was cited by almost all respondents. Emergency care is a concern for urban and rural families alike. However, in rural communities distance, transportation, and lack of available caregivers often exacerbate the situation. In the winter, school bus service is often cancelled -- the very weather conditions that create the situation make it difficult to obtain care. Parents worry that the school bus will bring their children home early on a bad winter day (a not uncommon occurrence) and young children often have to walk down long lanes in the snow and arrive at an empty house -- the neighbour's house may be some distance away and involve an even longer walk through the snow. Emergency care for sick children is another major issue. Locating emergency (and other) care can often be expensive as many families live in areas where a majority of their telephone calls are long distance.

Finding child care for children with special needs is often extremely difficult in rural areas. Again all of the typical problems are exacerbated. Many respondents indicated that infant care is often not available. Another need mentioned by respondents was for school age programs. It was also pointed out that summer recreation programs often operate at times that are not convenient -- beginning at 9:00 a.m. when factory work begins at 7:00 a.m., ending early in the afternoon, etc.

Concerns with the quality of child care were mentioned by many respondents. Child care in rural areas is predominately care by neighbours in the community. This often means that caregivers are well known to the parent who can be confident about the quality of care their child is receiving. However, some respondents suggested that this could also lead to a situation where parents are too "trusting" and don't evaluate the circumstances very carefully. Even more important is that the number of caregivers is sometimes quite limited and parents often do not have many options. Caregivers themselves are often isolated and typically have no child care training. Some respondents described situations where a single caregiver was taking care of 10, 12, 18 children. Many children are clearly in less than ideal situations.

It is often very difficult for caregivers to refuse care to families where there is some conflict in values/views between the caregiver and the parent -- visibility in rural communities is very high and parents may have no one else to turn to. It is often difficult for parents to find care for all of their children -- e.g., caregivers sometimes do not want to take both an infant and a preschool aged child. Caregivers are often reluctant to be registered or licenced and parents often have difficulty obtaining information on available child care. This is probably less true in small towns than in "the country". Further, the monitoring of care is difficult when caregivers are widely dispersed.

The values and attitudes of rural families were identified as an issue by many respondents. Many rural residents live in rural communities because they value the lifestyle. They want their children to grow up and develop skills in their own community. Many parents, therefore, do not want to take their children to larger population centres for care. It was pointed out that many rural families have "traditional" values -- centre based child care is often viewed as "institutional". Some parents do not want strangers caring for their children. People new to a community often find it difficult to find care or to themselves become providers.

Respondents from the North, in particular, indicated that it is often difficult to "get organized" -- parents sometimes don't recognize their need or have few expectations that they will receive services. Therefore there is little political pressure. It was also suggested that rural residents tend to be resourceful and therefore do not acknowledge problems or look toward government, agencies, etc. for help. Municipal officials often do not see a need for child care and are unwilling to provide the funds. In some communities individuals working in education, government, for the OPP, etc., stay for only one or two years and therefore have no strong commitment to the community. The importance of community involvement in service planning was stressed.

It is extremely important to take values and expectations into consideration when evaluating rural child care needs and preferences. An interesting example of this was provided by the experience of some respondents in providing child care for farm families attending courses and workshops sponsored by agricultural colleges and OMAF. It is often the case that when care is provided, it is not used -- parents leave their children at home or do not go to the event. This is often interpreted as evidence that child care is not required or wanted. An alternative interpretation is that child care is not expected on these occasions and therefore even when it is provided parents tend to make their standard arrangements. Also some parents do not want their young children to travel for long distances and in many instances parents feel that their children would not be happy with a strange caregiver in a group of strange children for a one-time only care situation. This is only one example of the difficulty of assessing attitudes and needs. A related theme that emerged in the interviews is the need to recognize that rural communities are not homogeneous. The varying values and attitutes of families from different ethnic, religious, and occupational groups must be respected.

11) National Survey

As part of the Federal Task Force on Child Care, members of the National Day Care Research Network conducted a study entitled "Parents' needs, preferences, and concerns about child care: case studies of 336 Canadian families." Dr. Donna Lero was the principal author of the report which was released in February 1985. The sample consisted of 192 urban families and 144 rural families. Below is a brief summary of the findings specific to the rural part of the sample (rural was defined as a community of less than 15,000 population at least one hour away from a community of 30,000 or more).

Lero found that care by either parent was most strongly preferred by rural families and a significant proportion of rural mothers preferred to be homemakers or to work at home. Also rural spouses were more likely to be available for child care, especially when mothers worked evenings or were "on call".

For the sample as a whole (urban and rural), relatives did not often appear as the dominant child care option. However, one exception to this was rural families in which the mothers of infants were employed full-time.

Only 7.1% of households in the entire sample included an adult in addition to the parents (usually, although not exclusively, grandparents). Almost all of these "extended households" were found among rural families. Despite this and the preference of employed rural mothers with infants, the overall proportion of families using relatives as main caregivers was comparable among rural and urban families -- 14.9% rural versus 13.6% urban. Rural families frequently indicated a need for additional community programs during the summer months for both preschool and school age children, as well as a need for transportation to these programs.

Lero also found that there was considerable demand for "formal" services (day care centres, nursery schools, before and after school programs), especially among urban mothers working either full- or part-time. However, formal services were also desired by rural mothers working full-time who had either infants or school age children (for rural mothers of infants who were working full-time, 43% preferred formal services; 21% preferred a relative).

In terms of utilization of formal services, urban rates were higher than rural rates. For families with children under six years, day care centres were used by 25% of the urban sample and by only 15% of the rural sample. All families using workplace day care centres lived in urban areas and enrollment in nursery school and kindergarten was more common in urban families (16.8% urban versus 12.2% rural).

There were similarities in terms of the services that families thought would improve child care quality and accessibility. For example, community-based information and referral services were seen as desirable in both urban and rural areas.

Fifty of the rural families were farm families. Lero reported that 15 farm families indicated that child care was needed during peak periods and that

their preference was for in-home care at these times. A number of farm families indicated that they tried to hire a teenager or older woman for this purpose if a relative was not available.

At least eight farm families reported having difficulty finding care during peak periods -- four mothers reported doing farm chores while their infants napped. A number of families also indicated a need for organized recreational programs, especially during the summer.

It is important to keep in mind that this study was not done to look at urban versus rural needs and preferences. Therefore, not all the data were analyzed in terms of this variable, nor did the report focus on this. The information cited above is therefore somewhat fragmentary, but it does point to some possible differences and similarities among urban and rural families regarding child care needs and preferences.

12) Report of the Task Force on Child Care

The report of Katie Cook's Task Force is interesting mostly in terms of how little information there is on rural child care. Barely three pages of the report are devoted to this issue. However, this is probably more a reflection of a lack of information and data rather than lack of need. As the report states:

> "Most studies on child care arrangements have been done in urban areas. Letters and briefs to the Task Force indicated that families living in rural areas have particular problems finding suitable child care arrangements. There are few child care centres or licensed family homes in Canada's smaller communities. There is also a lack of supplementary care such as organized play groups and nursery schools for rural children. Finding informal care can also be difficult in areas where the entire population is involved in seasonal work, such as fishing or farming."

13) Summary

The themes that characterize the interviews, reports, and surveys echo those described in the literature on rural service delivery. Lack of caregivers and care facilities, hours when care is needed, seasonal needs, isolation, transportation, and cost of care are all seen as barriers to finding and/or delivering rural child care services. The political structure of rural communities and the attitudes and values of rural residents also emerge as issues.

Extended families are often not available. Many rural parents in the work force utilize a combination of child care arrangements. It is suggested that many others are kept out of the work force because of the unavailability and/or costs of child care.

Safety of children on the farm and in winter weather are serious concerns for many parents. Finding care for "special" children and infants can be especially difficult. Emergency care is a problem. For many families with

access to transportation, travelling for approximately 10 miles to care is acceptable, although farm families tend to have a preference for in-home care especially during peak work periods.

Flexible services are seen as the only means of providing rural child care. Drop-in centres, child care registries and in some instances, small day care centres with flexible hours were suggested by many parents and professionals.

Whatever service is provided, it must be sensitive to local needs and values.

V. MODELS

The focus of this section is on child care models responsive to the needs and problems of rural communities. This will not be a comprehensive discussion — rather it is intended to generate a sense of the range of possibilities. The details of child care services must be responsive to the particular needs and preferences of the local community. Models must be specifically tailored or have the capacity to flexibly cover a range of needs. Thus the models described below can be seen as suggestions that might be adapted to meet local needs in particular rural areas. Some of the models provide care for the children of working parents while others provide supports and activities for families with young children. Both types of services are important in rural communities.

1) Centre-based Care

It is often assumed that day care centres are not congruent with rural needs and values. While this is often the case, this model should not be automatically ruled out in discussions of rural child care. In order to suit rural needs and circumstances, day care centres may have to be small and have flexible hours. An important first step is a review of the current legislation and regulations to determine what barriers, if any, exist regarding the operating and staffing of small centres.

Rural day care centres can often only be housed in existing local buildings churches, schools, community centres, etc. If centres in these locations are to be developed, the rules regarding the physical space required must be congruent with the use of such facilities. When a sufficient number of child care specialists is not available, the use of some combination of "circuit riders" (mobile, itinerant specialists) and local trained paraprofessionals could be examined. Family group care (two or more trained caregivers caring for ten or more children in a private home) is a potentially viable form of child care in rural areas and further development and evaluation of this model would be valuable. The basic issue is to provide for the development of viable small-scale centres.

The hours that centres operate must match the needs of the users. In some instances this is very difficult and it is important to assess the working patterns of the community. However, even some parts of the agricultural community can make use of day care centres. For example, in Haldimand-Norfolk a group of tobacco farmers have been operating a co-operative day care centre. The hours are not 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., but they are predictable — planting and harvest times and hours in the tobacco industry are more "regular" than in many other sectors of agriculture. The particular farm families using this centre are very positive about centre-based care and see it as providing a stimulating and enhancing environment for their children. However, given the negative attitudes to centre-based care among many rural families, it is extremely important to assess values and preferences before developing a program.

2) Home-based Care

Some form of home-based care is perhaps most congruent with rural attitudes and circumstances. This model of care is suggested most frequently by the literature, by professionals and by parents. Home-based care can take several forms. It is probably the most common kind of care at present -- involving informal arrangements made by parents with friends, relatives, and neighbours. This sort of home-based care is unregulated. It reportedly ranges in quality from excellent to totally appalling. Families using this kind of care are not eligible for subsidy.

An expansion of licensed private home day care (PHDC) is advocated by many professionals. However, many rural caregivers are reluctant to become licensed - they resent the intrusion and are suspicious of the regulations and "red tape". It is also more difficult to monitor PHDC in areas that are sparsely populated, where caregivers may be spread out over large distances. It is also often difficult to find caregivers whose hours of care match the needs of parents, especially given the low wages that caregivers receive. Caregivers need training, monitoring and support, all of which involve time and resources.

The model of resource centres providing child care registries is also seen as a way to make home-based care more accessible to rural families who often have great difficulty finding caregivers on both an ongoing and emergency basis. However, problems exist in terms of ensuring quality, the responsibility of the registry, and the reluctance of some caregivers to even be on a registry (e.g., some worry about the income tax implications). Also, although funds are available to establish and maintain a registry, subsidies cannot be administered to parents using the registry.

A review of both PHDC and child care registries in terms of rural needs and circumstances is required in order to begin to address these issues. This review should address the particular problems involved in regulation and monitoring, ensuring adequate training, and providing access to families in areas of low population density.

Another model of home-based care involves care in the home of the child rather than in the home of the caregiver. The farm community is especially interested in this model during peak periods, and two pilot projects have been tried to provide in-home care to farm families. One project was sponsored by the Farm Safety Association in Northumberland, and the other by the Federated Women's Institute of Ontario and Concerned Farm Women in Bruce. Although details of the two projects varied they both provided 3-4 in-home caregivers (paid in part by federal youth employment grants) to farm families based on the Agricrew model used by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Agricrew provides a team of four workers to a farmer to do a particular job lasting one to two days -- farmers call the co-ordinator and book the crew some days ahead. Similarly, in the child care projects, families called the child care co-ordinator and booked a caregiver for a set period of time -- usually one to two days. As with Agricrew, parents paid a flat fee. One of the eligibility criteria was that the caregiver provide child care only for those families where both parents were working on the farm. Caregivers were trained in farm safety and first aid and given some instruction on child care. It has

farm safety and first aid and given some instruction on child care. It has been suggested that a child care co-ordinator for this type of program could also work out of a Farm Labour Pool office (the Farm Labour Pool is basically a farm labour registry).

Peak periods coincide, at least to some extent, with the time that students are available for work. These are times when both parents are often working long hours in the fields and when it is often seen as difficult to take even a 30-40 minute round trip to transport a child to care, which is often not available. Many families see in-home care during peak periods as the only alternative to taking their children to the fields.

MCSS is currently sponsoring four additional pilot projects modelled after the ones that were tried in Northumberland and Bruce. These four projects were initiated in the counties of Northumberland, Dufferin-Simcoe, Lambton, and the District of Timiskaming. The projects began operation in late spring and early summer, 1986. They involve several different models of care and it is hoped that they will provide a basis for the design and implementation of future on-going rural child care services. The projects have been funded as demonstration projects and their evaluation should provide useful information for determining what does and does not work in rural and farm communities. (For a more detailed description of the four pilot projects, see Appendix 1).

3) Resource Centres

The resource centre is clearly suited to rural needs. In addition to the child care registry, discussed above, resource centres can provide many services for rural communities. Information and workshops for both caregivers and parents, toy lending libraries, informal drop-in arrangements are among the services that can help to break down isolation and provide socialization experiences for children (and social experiences for their parents). Many resource centres are currently operating in rural Ontario. A proposed survey of all resource centres should indicate the extent to which various program components support parenting and quality child care and specifically meet rural needs.

4) Mobile Programs

Some programs are "mobile", like the toybus on Manitoulin Island -- a very popular toy lending bus that moves from community to community. Other kinds of mobile resource programs are possible -- workshops for parents and caregivers, drop-in for parents and children, etc. For more remote areas or communities with dispersed populations some sort of mobile service may be the most practical solution. These can be seen not only as part-time child care, but also as an important prevention service for isolated families. The whole service can be mobile -- a van or bus containing all of the materials. Alternately a resource person can move from community to community utilizing community facilities. In one Northern Ontario community, five schools, in different areas have provided their gymnasiums one day a week to a resource person who runs a varied program for children and parents.

While these programs can serve many needs, it is important to note that unlike day care centres or private home day care, they are occasional programs and not appropriate for working parents who need daily or regular services.

5) Drop-in Centres

A model of child care mentioned by rural parents and professionals is the drop-in centre. Resource centres now often have a drop-in component. However, parents must stay on the premises with their children unless there are five or less children in the care of one adult. While this is a valuable service, many parents want and need to be able to leave their children for some period of time. This provides a "break" for parents, a socialization experience for children and one kind of emergency care. In some instances farm families would use a drop-in centre during peak periods if it were located close by. There are many different forms that drop-in centres might take -- from large centres to private homes serving a maximum of five children, and from brief to extended periods of care. There are also many organizational difficulties -- co-ordination, the degree to which parents must book ahead, methods of payment and subsidy, etc. Regulation, monitoring and ensuring quality care are also issues which must be addressed. Discussion and research looking into the possibilities of establishing different models of drop-in child care would be a step toward meeting some rural needs.

6) Co-operatives

Another common suggestion -- relating to organizational issues -- is to involve parents in co-operative attempts to solve child care problems. It is suggested that this can take advantage of existing networks in rural communities and of community cohesion. Co-operatives can operate in the context of day care centres, nursery schools, play-groups, exchange of private home care, emergency services, etc. However, co-ordination and support are necessary to help initiate and sustain co-operative efforts. A related issue is the use of volunteers. Training volunteers and using expertise already in the community to develop and administer projects is another area requiring further discussion and exploration.

7) Transportation

Given that transportation is often identified as a major problem, the development of transportation networks should be explored. Parents often point to the transportation system used by the schools and wonder why there cannot be some co-ordination with child care. This may or may not be a sensible suggestion -- the issue is quite complex. However, some attempt at solving transportation problems would, for many rural communities, be a major step forward in providing service in child care.

8) Linkages and Integration

The entire issue of linkages and integration of services is very important. Where an existing nursery school or day care centre is operating, a child care registry or emergency drop-in centre could perhaps be added. Alternately, child care services could be linked to other social services. In Haldiman-Norfolk a resource centre is being co-ordinated through the Children's Mental Health Centre. Some form of assessment for special needs children could be linked to the community's child care services. It might be possible to establish multi-service centres with a mandate that includes child care as well as other social services. Hopefully, the review of the two Network Models funded by MCSS in Wellington and Pickering will indicate some of the possibilities for linkage.

Education (i.e., the school system) enters discussions of rural child care in many ways. The use of school facilities is suggested. Another suggestion is before and after school programs making use of school buses and older students looking after the younger children with some training and supervision. Exploring the feasibility of this kind of suggestion requires the co-operation of both MCSS and Education. Once again, while this particular suggestion may or may not be feasible, the schools are an important presence in rural communities and should not be overlooked when planning for rural child care.

Linking the generations has also been suggested. Some programs in the U.S. have successfully integrated senior citizens into school programs and researchers at the University of Guelph are exploring the potential for bringing together seniors and young children. Although this suggestion cuts across urban-rural boundaries, the demographic composition of some rural communities might make it particularly attractive (it must be noted that this is not a panacea -- while some seniors may be quite interested many may be even more interested in a quiet retirement).

Rural needs and circumstances require an innovative and flexible approach to the delivery of adequate child care. Hopefully, the preceding discussion has indicated that there are a range of possible answers to "rural problems", both in terms of the introduction of new models and a review of existing models. Suggested models need to be tested in actual communities. An active "action research" program is required -- like the rural pilot projects discussed earlier -- which focus on meeting specific needs and identifying barriers to service delivery. It should be emphasized again that not all of the ideas and possibilities have been included in this section, and that solutions must be developed in a community context.

VI. STATISTICS CANADA AND DNIS DATA

Data were obtained from Statistics Canada showing age groups of children at home, in terms of the work status of each parent, and the size of the population centre in which the children live. These data allow for a determination of the proportion of young children living in communities of different sizes who are "in need" of care because of the labour force participation of their parents.

Table 1 indicates the distribution of age groupings of children in terms of population centres. The breakdown of population size is that commonly used by Statistics Canada. Tables 2 and 3 indicate the proportion of children in different age groups, living in different population centres, whose parents do and do not work. Tables 4, 5 and 6 look at the relationships between child populations and the availability of formal child care services. All the tables are located at the end of this chapter.

It is clear from Table 1 that, in general, the absolute number of children increases as the size of the population centres increase. This is of course, precisely what would be expected. The exception, however, is children living in population centres of less than 1,000, where there is a substantial "bulge" in the numbers across all age groups. This lends some weight to the idea that part of a rural definition or typology for Ontario should include a category of population centres of less than 1,000 — especially when services for children are a concern.

Tables 2 and 3 indicate, however, that living in a population centre of a particular size has no bearing on the likelihood that a child will require care. The percentage of children whose parents work is virtually identical across population centres. This is true whether the data are examined in terms of both parents (or the sole parent in a single parent family) working full time (Table 2) or in terms of parents working some combination of full and part time or part time only (Table 3). For these data full and part-time work are determined by the census respondents themselves and are not based on a set number of hours (housework is excluded).

It is only in population centres of over 500,000 (i.e., Metropolitan Toronto), that there is a noticeable increase in the percentage of children whose parents work full time. The comparable difference with respect to children whose parents work at least part time is considerably smaller. It is also interesting to note that the proportions do not change substantially across age groups.

These data clearly indicate that no urban-rural distinction can be made in terms of the likelihood that a particular child will require child care based on his/her parents' work status. The absolute numbers are smaller in smaller centres, but the proportions do not vary.

Given this pattern, it is important to look at the distribution of child care resources across population centres and compare these to the numbers of young children — equitable distribution of resources would mean a

relatively close match between the proportion of the total child population in a given population centre category and the proportion of total child care resources. In other words if 20% of the children in Ontario live in population centres of under 1,000, then 20% of child care resources should be located in centres of under 1,000.

Tables 4 and 5 indicate the match between proportion of children and proportion of child care resources across different population centres. These data are from the Day Nurseries Information System (DNIS), March 1985. The data are not broken down by age group, because the proportion of children is virtually identical across age groups. The child care resources that were investigated in this way are resource centres, day care centres and private home day care agencies. A determination of the number of children served by these resources could only be made for day care centres.

One can see from Table 4 that population centres of less than 1,000 and more than 500,000 have proportionately fewer child care resources based on the proportion of children. Looking at the data in this way the very rural and very urban areas of the province are seriously underserviced. That is, areas under 1,000 have 20% of the children, but have between 0 and 5% of the resources and areas over 500,000 have 41% of the children and between 16 and 29% of the resources. Although, the relative size of child care programs varies a great deal, a similar picture emerges in Table 5 which indicates the proportion of children served in licenced day care centres rather than the discrete number of programs. Again it is clear that the very rural areas are proportionately underserviced.

There is one aspect of these percentages that could be seriously misleading. It is not the case that population centres with populations between 2,500 and 499,999 have adequate services, even though they might have a reasonable proportion of existing services. Table 6 indicates the number of children enrolled full and part time in licenced day care centres in terms of age of child and size of the city or town where the centre is located. While this represents only one form of care, it is clear that the numbers do not even come close the matching the number of children who are likely to need care based on their parents' work status (see tables 2 and 3).

As an additional note of caution it should be remembered that the Census data and Day Nurseries data were collected at different points in time (1981 versus 1985) and that although a careful attempt was made to match the size of population centres for the Day Nurseries data with the Census breakdowns, there may be some inaccuracies.

Overall, however, the juxtaposition of these two sets of data gives some indication of both the relative and absolute need for child care services in Ontario.

TABLE 1 Number of children living in centres of varying population size in Ontario*

Population size groups	Number of children under 4 years	Number of children 4-6 years	Number of Children 7-14 years
Under 1,000 (farm plus non-farm)	93,495	73,770	217,740
1,000 - 2,499	9,080	7,055	20,025
2,500 - 4,999	11,640	9,010	25,555
5,000 - 9,999	16,160	12,620	33,570
10,000 - 29,999	26,775	20,770	57,850
30,000 - 99,999	40,595	31,090	83,015
100,000 - 499,999	75,405	57,965	167,270
500,000 & Over	189,960	142,550	422,515
	463,110	354,830	1,027,540

*Based on data provided by Statistics Canada: 1981 Census

TABLE 2 Percentage (and number) of children in centres of varying population size in Ontario whose parents work full time*

Population size groups	Percentage of children under 4 years		Percentage of children 4-6 years		Percentage of children 7-14 years	
Under 1,000 (farm plus non-farm)	31	(28,983)	27	(19,918)	34	(7,403)
1,000 - 2,499	33	(2,996)	29	(2,046)	36	(7,209)
2,500 - 4,999	30	(3,492)	31	(2,793)	36	(9,200)
5,000 - 9,999	32	(5,171)	30	(3,786)	37	(12,421)
10,000 - 29,999	34	(9,104)	31	(6,439)	38	(21,983)
30,000 - 99,999	33	(13,396)	30	(9,327)	35	(29,055)
100,000 - 499,999	34	(25,638)	31	(17,969)	36	(60,217)
500,000 & Over	43	(81,683)	39	(55,595)	45	(190,132)

*In two parent families, both parents work full time; in single parent families, single parent works full time

TABLE 3 Percentage (and number) of children in centres of varying population size in Ontario whose parents work at least part-time

Population size groups	Percentage of children under 4 years		Percentage of children 4-6 years		Percentage of children 7-14 years	
Under 1,000 (farm plus non farm)	54	(50,487)	53	(39,098)	60	(130,644)
1,000 - 2,499	55	(4,994)	52	(3,739)	62	(12,416)
2,500 - 4,999	53	(6,169)	55	(4,956)	62	(15,844)
5,000 - 9,999	54	(8,726)	56	(7,067)	63	(21,149)
10,000 - 29,999	57	(15,262)	57	(11,839)	65	(37,603)
30,000 - 99,999	56	(22,733)	56	(17,410)	63	(52,299)
100,000 - 499,999	56	(42,267)	55	(31,881)	61	(102,035)
500,000 & Over	60	(113,976)	60	(79,828)	66	(278,860)

*In two parent families, both parents work part-time, or one works full-time and one works part-time; in single parent families, single parent works part-time

TABLE 4 Percentage of children and percentage of child care services* in centres of varying population size in Ontario

Population size groups	Percentage of children (all ages) (n = 1943)	Percentage of day care centres (n = 65)	Percentage of resource centres	Percentage of PHDC agencies (n = 61)
Under 1,000 (farm plus non-farm)	20	5	5	0
1,000 - 2,499	2	4	5	0
2,500 - 4,999	3	4	8	2
5,000 - 9,999	3	4	5	6
10,000 - 29,999	6	10	12	15
30,000 - 99,999	9	21	20	30
100,000 - 499,999	16	30	17	31
500,000 & Over	41	21	29	16

*Based on data provided by MCSS Corporate Program Implementation, Child Care Initiatives: DNIS, March, 1985

TABLE 5 Percentage of children overall and percentage of all children enrolled full day and part-day* in licenced day care centres in centres of varying population size in Ontario

Population size groups	Percentage of children (all ages)	Percentage of children enrolled full-day in day care centres	Percentage of children enrolled part-day in day care centres
Under 1,000 (farm plus non-farm)	20	1	4
1,000 - 2,499	2	1	4
2,500 - 4,999	3	3	5
5,000 - 9,999	3	3	5
10,000 - 29,999	6	8	14
30,000 - 99,999	9	16	26
100,000 - 499,999	16	40	28
500,000 & Over	41	28	14

* Based on DNIS, March, 1985

TABLE 6 Number of children, by age, enrolled in licenced day care centres, full-day and part-day, in Ontario*

Population size groups	Full-Day				Part-Day			
	Infant/ Toddler	Pre-school	School Age	Total	Infant/ Toddler	Pre-school	School Age	Total
Under 1,000 (including farm plus non-farm)	51	388	48	487	99	1,964	49	2,112
1,000 - 2,499	71	386	6	463	77	2,119	80	2,276
2,500 - 4,999	134	902	17	1,053	73	2,479	81	2,633
5,000 - 9,999	48	895	24	967	57	2,485	82	2,624
10,000 - 29,999	416	2,639	167	3,222	256	6,663	307	7,226
30,000 - 99,999	861	4,855	436	6,152	368	12,142	736	13,246
100,000- 499,999	2,391	11,853	1,159	15,403	547	12,955	977	14,479
500,000 & Over	1,427	7,235	1,979	10,541	134	5,908	907	6,949

*Based on DNIS, March 1985

VII. CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

There is substantial consensus in the literature, interviews and surveys that rural child care involves many unique issues and concerns.

The list of rural issues includes: low population density, dispersed population, transportation difficulties, winter weather conditions, social and physical isolation, children's safety, lack of caregivers and trained personnel, hours when care is needed, seasonal variation in need, lack of economic resources, rural values and attitudes, the political structure of rural communities, urban biases in outlook and planning.

Not all of the items on the list are necessarily issues for a given rural community. However, a subset of them will inevitably play a role in the development of any rural child care service. In addition, these factors are interactive -- they do not exist and cannot be addressed, in isolation.

The interviews and surveys coupled with the statistical data indicate a substantial need for increased child care services in rural Ontario. However, opinion regarding need for child care is not uniform -- it ranges from a farm woman at the Second National Farm Women's Conference who said that finding adequate care for her young children was her most urgent concern and preoccupation to a farm women who explosively maintained that no women could possibly prefer "milking a cow to nursing her child."

Flexibility, and building on indigeneous strengths and services, are probably the most important aspects of developing rural child care models. The service must develop from, and be responsive to variations in local needs and attitudes.

Currently proposed reviews of existing models of child care -- PHDC, resource centres, family group care, network models -- can identify the extent to which these models are meeting rural needs and circumstances and what modifications might be necessary.

Pilot or demonstration projects like the ones currently underway in Northumberland, Dufferin-Simcoe, Lambton and Timiskaming can help in the development and evaluation of models and services. This sort of "action research" is an important vehicle for understanding and meeting rural needs.

A review of the regulations regarding day care centres is also called for. This review could indicate ways in which the organization of day care centres could be made sufficiently flexible to meet rural needs and circumstances.

A review of existing models should cover issues such as the role played by municipalities (many rural municipalities are currently unwilling and/or unable to provide child care funding); regulations regarding space and staffing (often difficult to meet in rural communities); subsidies; etc.

Even in instances where changes and modifications in existing models are not feasible, it is important to explore both the ability of the current system to meet needs and the barriers in the system.

New models need to be developed and creative linkages to persons and services already in communities should be explored.

The search for a simple definition of the term "rural" is not productive. A continuum or typology is a more realistic reflection of real-life circumstances.

Rural communities are now sufficiently like urban centres to require child care services (female labour force participation is one of the most striking similarities). Rural communities are also sufficiently different from urban centres to require planning and policy development suited to their unique circumstances.

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Appendix 1

DESCRIPTION OF MCSS RURAL CHILD CARE PILOT PROJECTS

Four rural child care pilot projects have been initiated, one each in the counties of Northumberland, Dufferin-Simcoe, Lambton and the District of Timiskaming. The projects began operation in late Spring and early Summer, 1986.

The projects are in response to concerns raised by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's rural child care committee and by a MCSS survey identifying rural child care needs and preferences. It is acknowledged that the unique circumstances of rural and farm families may require innovative and flexible models of child care. However these models need to be developed and tested.

The four projects have therefore been funded as pilot or demonstration projects. Some of the goals to be met by these projects -- which will all be evaluated -- are:

- to develop models of child care service that meet the needs, circumstances and preferences of rural and farm families in Ontario
- to provide the basis for the design and implementation of future ongoing rural child care services across the province.
- to determine some of the organizational parametres of child care models responsive to rural needs and circumstances
- to determine the extent to which specific models and program components are in fact responsive to rural needs and circumstances
- to determine the feasibility of delivering child care to rural communities given both the organizational parametres required and the responsiveness of particular models (i.e., "cost effectiveness")

While the four projects have many common elements each was developed in the local community and each has unique characteristics. They will therefore, be described separately.

Northumberland

The Northumberland project has two models of care -- (in-home care) and care provided in the home of a caregiver (private-home care). In-home care will be provided by three students whose salaries are paid by a federal S.E.E.D. grant obtained by the Northumberland project. Farm families can call the project co-ordinator and book one of the students for the period of time that child care is required. All "bookings" are made by and kept track of by the project co-ordinator. The in-home aspect of the project will operate throughout the summer months coinciding with farm peak work periods.

For the second model of care --private-home -- caregivers will be recruited from the community and will look after up to five children in their home. (There is some possibility that this model will be expanded, and two caregivers will care for more than 5 children in the home of one of the caregivers). For this model, the project co-ordinator will act as a link between caregiver and parents, providing a registry of caregivers. This model will operate all year and the possibility of providing licensed private home day care will be investigated.

Parents will pay a flat daily fee which is the same for both models of care.

Dufferin-Simcoe

The Dufferin-Simcoe project has several models of care. Farm families can book in-home care for the time that care is required through the project co-ordinator. Alternately parents can book network care. In this model families living close together will pool their children in the home of one of the children and a caregiver will come to that home. If more than 5 children are pooled, then 2 caregivers will provide care. The project co-ordinator is responsible for co-ordinating this model.

Care can also take place in the home of the caregiver (private-home). The project co-ordinator will act as a link between parents and caregivers, providing a registry of caregivers.

Parents will pay a flat daily fee, but the fee structure for in-home care will be different from the fee for network or private-home care.

The Dufferin-Simcoe project will end at the end of October.

Timiskaming

The Timiskaming project will provide in-home care for farm families during peak work periods. Initially only farm families with 3 or more children will be able to book this service through the project co-ordinator as required (the use of the in-home model by smaller families will be subject to special approval).

The second model of care in Timiskaming is a licensed Private Home Day Care Agency. Care will be provided in the home of licensed private-home caregivers, following MCSS rules and regulations for PHDC. The PHDC model will operate all year.

Parents will pay a flat daily fee which is the same for both models of care.

A toy-lending library is in the planning stage.

Lambton

The Lambton project will be operating a year-round registry. Parents will be able to call the project co-ordinator to obtain the names of caregivers who are willing to provide care either in the child's home (in-home) or in their own home (private-home). The co-ordinator will not make any arrangements for either model, but will act as a link between parents and caregivers.

The fee structure for the two models of care will differ.

A list of caregivers who can provide emergency child care is also planned.

Additional Elements

A common element in all of the projects is that caregivers will be recruited from the local community and provided with training and support. Although the details vary from project to project all caregivers will be given first aid training, farm safety training and information on child development and planning child activities.

All projects have a co-ordinator who is responsible for running the registry and/or co-ordinating in-home and network bookings.

All of the projects have attempted to make use of local community resources and link-up with existing services.

All of the projects will attempt to provide service for extended hours and week-ends.

Details of funding and fee structures vary from project to project. The number of families and children served also differs. This variability along with variations in models of service, will provide a basis for looking at a wide range of possibilities for establishing viable models of child care in rural communities.